

**Mill Brook Corridor Study Group  
Meeting Minutes, March 20, 2018  
Arlington Town Hall, Second Floor Conference Room**

Group Attendees: Nat Strosberg, Ed Gordon, Ann LeRoy, Wendy Richter, Janet Riordan, Ellen Cohen, Grace Dingee, Lela Shepherd

Minutes of February 13, 2018 meeting were approved with two corrections to assignments for brook section updates (add Grace to #2 and replace Ellen for Joe in #7).

Continuing our work on updating the 2010 Mill Brook Linear Park Report, we discussed the need to prepare a more formal presentation and report to the Master Plan Implementation Committee, of which this group is a part. Several members had submitted updates for their sections, and others are encouraged to do so. Nat and Ann will be the primary editors and will circulate revisions to all, starting with the introductory sections.

New section assignments:

1. Arlington Reservoir to Park Avenue - Ann LeRoy
2. Park Avenue to Forest Street - Edward Gordon and Janet Riordan and Grace Dingee
3. Forest Street to Brattle Street - Ann LeRoy
4. Brattle Street to Grove Street - Wendy Richter and Amber Christoffersen
5. Grove Street to Mill Street - Charlotte Milan
6. Mill Street to Mystic Street - Nat Strosberg
7. Mystic Street to Lower Mystic Lake – Ellen Cohen

We then brainstormed ideas for action steps related to the five benefits outlined in the report (environmental, recreational, flood control, economic, transportation). We expanded the list to seven categories of benefits (adding historical context and placemaking) and began to itemize specific actions for each one (attached with later additions). Members are asked to review their sections again and to continue updating them with these action objectives in mind.

The group will review the new material at its next meeting, **Tuesday, April 24, at 9:00 am.**

Other items discussed:

- Saturday, March 24, 10 am – 2 pm, EcoFest 2018: Greenward, at Arlington Town Hall.
- March 30 – Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness report due to be submitted to Planning Dept, and later circulated to this group for review; public meeting to be scheduled
- Tuesday, April 3, 7 pm, Review of Reservoir Master Plan design and engineering plans to date, at Senior Center
- Saturday, April 14, 10 am – 2 pm, Mill Brook Corridor/Wellington Park redesign process site meeting at the park
- Sunday, April 22, 1:30-3:30 pm – Cleanup at Wellington Park and corridor section
- Nat will invite Ali Carter, the Town's economic development coordinator, to attend the next group meeting so that she can discuss how current historic signage development and other efforts in Arlington Heights could dovetail with initiatives for the brook corridor.

## **Benefits and Action Categories for the Mill Brook Corridor**

The benefits of renewed attention to the Mill Brook corridor can be grouped into seven categories. Associated actions to improve the corridor are suggested for each of these topics.

### **1) Environment/Ecosystem Management:**

- Improve water quality through better monitoring and repairs of storm water drains to reduce overflows and contain contaminants
- Clean the streambed and banks of trash, vegetative overgrowth, and large natural debris hazards
- Stabilize the shoreline to mitigate erosion
- Remove invasive species and encourage the proliferation of native and pollinator vegetation
- Incorporate long-term sustainability and vulnerability goals that complement any improvements
- Utilize findings of the Arlington Reservoir Master Plan related to water quality, water flow into the brook, and other ecological conditions

### **2) Flood Control:**

- Enlarge the capacity of some restricted flow areas by removing natural blockages and widening or realigning channels and culverts
- Control bank erosion to prevent clogging of the brook with silt and rocks
- Recreate mill ponds, build rain gardens or bio-swales, and engineer other areas for natural and controlled bank overflow during storms
- Utilize findings of the Town's 2018 Vulnerability Preparedness Assessment

### **3) Recreation:**

- Create safe, accessible and attractive walking paths and gathering areas along the corridor
- Improve and increase the number of sitting areas
- Add bike racks and other amenities (i.e., toilets, trash barrels and lighting) where appropriate
- Improve and expand connections and loops between the corridor and Minuteman Bikeway
- Build or renovate children's play areas with both active play equipment and opportunities for nature exploration

### **4) Economic Development:**

- Envision a Mill District commercial corridor with design guidelines for new and expanded businesses and mixed-use redevelopment opportunities at key properties
- Encourage incorporation of attractive views, gathering areas, and other park elements in these new plans
- Build on existing commercial development studies and analyses, and the successful example of the Brigham's site redevelopment
- Change zoning as needed to encourage inventive, sustainable and exciting new developments in the industrial district as well as adjacent business and residential districts
- Create incentives and development guidelines for new and existing landowners and commercial users to enhance corridor improvements
- Focus on historical tourism and expand such activities in conjunction with other initiatives (Battle Road, Freedom's Way, etc.)

### **5) Transportation:**

- Improve pedestrian and bicycle links to public transportation facilities such as the Arlington Heights MBTA Bus Terminal and bus stops along Massachusetts Avenue
- Improve connections to the Minuteman Bikeway, including new footbridges at key access points
- Add new links and improve access to existing walkways along the brook

- Work with property owners to remove current fences and other such obstructions where feasible (i.e., near Cooke's Hollow /Buzzell Fields)
- Highlight connections from Mass Ave and Summer Street to the brook pathways and the Bikeway via cross streets (Mill, Grove, Brattle, Forest, Ryder, Park)

#### **6) Historical Context:**

- Highlight Mill Brook's heritage as the location of many active mill sites during the 17th through 19th centuries
- Identify locations of existing and former mills, dams and mill ponds
- Highlight the heritage landscape of the entire Mill Brook watershed from Arlington's Great Meadows in East Lexington to the Lower Mystic Lake
- Incorporate historic preservation standards into any redevelopment within the corridor

#### **7) Placemaking:**

- Develop a comprehensive plan that that incorporates and complements all of these categories
- Design landscape improvements to create a more visually appealing greenway
- Utilize new signage, landscaping, public art and infrastructure to create a unified identity for the Mill Brook Corridor and its varied mixed-use features
- Consider daylighting portions of the brook that are now culverted and implementing other measures to enhance viewsheds and build greater local resilience to climate change impacts
- Develop educational materials and regular programs at public sites along the corridor to create better awareness about the brook and its history
- Work closely with abutters of the brook and those within the broader corridor